

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-5, and 7-11 were pending in the application. Claims 5 and 7-9 have been amended to remove reference numbers, to improve antecedent basis, and to place the claims in more typical U.S. format. The scope of the claims has not been changed. Therefore, entrance of these amendments is respectfully requested. Further, claims 1, 3, 4, 10, and 11 have been canceled and new claims 12-16 added. Support for new claims 12-15 may be found, e.g., in Fig. 6. Support for new claim 16 may be found, e.g., in Fig. 8 and page 12, lines 14-19 of the present application. Therefore, claims 5, 7-9, and 12-16 are now pending.

35 U.S.C. 112 Rejections

Claims 10 and 11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph. Claims 10 and 11 have been canceled.

Prior Art Rejections

Claims 1, 3-5, and 7-11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,178,361 to George et al. (hereinafter "George") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,733,024 to Slocum et al. (hereinafter "Slocum") and U.S. Patent No. 6,520,727 to Babbs et al. (hereinafter "Babbs"). Claims 1, 3, 4, 10, and 11 have been canceled. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections as they may apply to the remaining claims for at least the following reasons.

Claim 5 recites that the workstation has, on at least two different side walls, kinematic coupling connecting elements that coact with corresponding kinematic coupling connecting elements on at least one side wall of the substrate conveying module. None of the cited references teaches, suggests, or discloses kinematic coupling connecting elements as claimed. This feature allows the customer to reconfigure the system, as needed.

First, elements 15 and 16 (and 14 and 17) are on the same side of MHU 1 (or Module 2) of George. Second, according to page 6, lines 6-8 of the present application, the kinematic coupling connecting elements provide "for an immovable

connection between the modules, but at the same time the two modules are automatically aligned with one another by way of the corresponding fits." (Emphasis added.)

George discloses MHU exhaust interface port 16 and process module exhaust interface connection 17. While it is true that these ports 16, 17 are self-aligning, George teaches that it is the MHU latch clevis assembly 11 (not ports 16, 17 or roller 14 and ramp 15) that provides the immovable connection between MHU 1 and process module 2. (Col. 10, lines 45-67.) Connection by the MHU latch clevis assembly 11 happens at a different time than the self-alignment of the ports 16, 17. Slocum does not teach that the kinematic couplings provide for an immovable connection. For example, as shown in Fig. 16, modules 111 are readily removable from main frame 114, in spite of kinematic couplings 112.

Babbs fails to cure the deficiencies of George and Slocum. None of the cited references, individually or in combination, teaches, suggests, or discloses kinematic coupling connecting elements as claimed. Therefore, claim 5, and all claims dependent therefrom, are believed to be patentable over the cited art.

If the Examiner finds the above arguments compelling, but believes that the previous description of the kinematic coupling connecting elements should be imported directly into the claims, the Applicants will be happy to amend claim 5 accordingly.

New dependent claims 12-16 are believed to be patentable over the cited prior art for at least the same reasons as claim 5. New claims 12-16 also contain additional patentable limitations. For example, claim 12 recites that the substrate conveying module has kinematic coupling connecting elements on at least two different side walls. George discloses a process module 2 having process module exhaust interface connection 17. George does not teach, suggest, or disclose that process module 2 has connections 17 on more than one side wall.

Conclusion

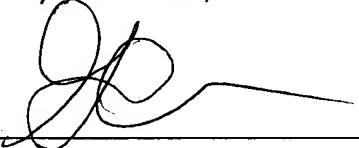
Applicants believe that the present application is now in condition for allowance. Withdrawal of the finality of the Office Action, entrance of the above

amendments, and favorable reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

Respectfully submitted,

By _____


Glenn Law
Attorney for Applicants
Registration No. 34,371

Date: September 25, 2003

FOLEY & LARDNER
Customer Number: 22428



22428

PATENT TRADEMARK OFFICE

Telephone: (202) 672-5300
Facsimile: (202) 672-5399